



Harris School of Public Policy  
University of Chicago  
PPHA 32750  
Keller 1002, F 1:30pm-4:20pm

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## **Spring Term, 2024: Hydropolitics: Water Policy and Conflict (PPHA 32750)**

### **Information about this course**

#### **Background and Goals**

This course introduces students to the central challenges of water resource management policy, at the international and domestic levels, through the concept of “hydropolitics.” This is the idea that water resource management is an essentially social and political activity that must negotiate between science and society. The course does not presume any non-general knowledge about water resources or even environmental resource policy. The goal will be to establish a firm basis about water politics from which students interested in development or environmental resource policy can work.

Despite its fundamental importance for human life, water is frequently left unregulated or managed in conflicting and contested ways. The course begins with an introduction to key concepts in water resource policy at the international, national, and (to a lesser extent) civic scales. The course then looks at specific management challenges and responses in sanitation (WaSH), drinking water, agricultural development, inter-sectoral use conflict, international treaties, hydropower development, and climate resilience. Topics and contexts will adjust to the interests of students in the course.

#### **How this class will work**

- **Lectures:** They will take place in person in Keller Hall 1002 at 1:30 PM on Fridays. I will also simulcast them over Zoom. It’s much preferred that you attend in person because the room is large and it’s often hard to hear discussion over Zoom. However, if you’re sick or can’t make it, feel free to watch it that way. The sessions will also be recorded so you can watch them later.
- **Attendance:** I don’t take attendance. This is graduate school. It’s elective. It’s up to you to be responsible for doing the readings and showing up to class.

- **Canvas:** I use Canvas for hosting all of the readings. There is no book for the course, I provide all course materials via modules on Canvas. The assignments for the course will also appear on Canvas and they will be turned in there as well.
- **Class Time Structure:** I aim to make lectures interactive, but typically the first part of the session is fairly one-directional. I am always receptive to questions or comments during this part, however, and we may well get into a discussion as a result. We take a short break halfway through because it's a long session on a Friday. The second half of class provides more opportunities for getting into discussion and pursuing student interests.
- **How Readings and Assignments Contribute to the Course:** We don't often go through a reading in detail during lecture. I provide the readings to give you the context necessary to understand the lectures, so it's important that you finish the readings before class. The assignments are an opportunity to practice analytical policy writing on a novel topic. So, you should approach them as that sort of mental exercise. I design them to help you develop policy research writing skills that are essential to promotion in public policy jobs.
- **My Responsibilities:** I will provide you with as engaging a lecture as I'm capable of giving. I am receptive to discussion and objections and I want the class to be enjoyable and useful to you. I will have office hours and will be happy to arrange other out-of-class meetings over Zoom. I, and the TAs will return your papers with helpful critical comments to assist your improvement in writing. The course is meant to be enriching rather than deeply challenging. If you're struggling with the material, please reach out and we will help.
- **Your Responsibilities:** Attend lectures. Do the readings thoughtfully, bring questions to lecture, listen to one another and don't be dismissive of others' opinions. Be kind and attempt to occupy the viewpoints of people you disagree with before responding to them. Do your assignments with honest effort - they represent your ability and they're only useful if they're an expression of your own work.

## Student assignments

Assignment	Points (200)	Description	Evaluation	Due
<b>Participation</b>	20 (10%)	Active attendance and participation in the course. Participating in class discussion, posting resources or discussions on Canvas, interactions with the instructor and/or TAs outside of class, including office hours.	Based on contact with the instructor and TAs, quality of participation in lecture discussions.	<b>End of term</b>
<b>Brief 1: Rights &amp; Economics</b>	30 (15%)	2-page policy brief weighing economic and rights-based approaches to a policy problem.	Based especially on quality of the thesis, clarity and efficiency of analysis, and clarity of policy recommendations.	<b>4/14 1:30 PM</b>
<b>Brief 2: WASH/Agriculture</b>	50 (25%)	2-page policy brief on a policy controversy concerning either WASH programming or Agricultural policy	Based especially on quality of the thesis, clarity and efficiency of analysis, and clarity of policy recommendation, as well as improvement from last brief.	<b>4/28 1:30 PM</b>
<b>Presentation</b>	40 (20%)	Recorded powerpoint presentation on one of your two policy briefs. No more than 5 minutes and two slides. The goal is to practice oral presentation of your ideas	Based on clarity, quality of slides and visuals, efficiency	<b>5/5 1:30 PM</b>
<b>Term Paper</b>	60 (30%)	Longer, 5-7 page, paper on a water conflict issue and case of your choice, including policy recommendations. An opportunity to impress.	Quality of thesis and argument, quality of research, narrow focus, analysis of recommendations, quality of writing.	<b>5/23 11:59 PM</b>

## Readings, topics, and schedules

All of the readings will be available as PDFs on the Canvas site. It's your responsibility to retrieve the relevant texts and read them before class. **Please check this frequently as the readings may be adjusted throughout the quarter, though announcements will be made about changes to the syllabus.** The readings will emphasize cases and arguments. More technical background will be supplied in the lectures. Students interested in digging into specifics of local policy should discuss this with the instructor who may be able to direct them to further resources.

All readings and assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. **Readings and videos listed here are required.** I will make a note of what to focus on. Some of them can be skimmed. The modules on Canvas have many more optional resources, videos, readings, and links to external stories and tools that you can pursue if you'd like to dig further into a topic. **They are *not* required** but many of them provide useful context. It's not a terrible idea to check them out, but you won't be accountable for that material.

	Topic and Goals	Readings (all found on Canvas)	Other/Due
3/22	<b>Introduction to Water and Hydropolitics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water as a political object</li> <li>The world's water resources</li> <li>What "Global Water Crisis?"</li> </ul>	No readings, but there are interesting tools to explore in the Canvas module.	
3/29	<b>Water as Property and Economic Resource</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water's price vs. its value</li> <li>Doctrines of ownership</li> <li>Allocation and water markets</li> <li>Utility privatization</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video: "The Meaning of Commodification"</li> <li>Ingram, Whiteley, and Perry, "The Importance of Equity and the Limits of Efficiency in Water Resources"</li> <li>Baer, "The Global Water Crisis, Privatization, and the Bolivian Water War"</li> </ol>	
4/5	<b>Preservation and Water as a Human Right</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water's non-economic value</li> <li>Is there a human right to water?</li> <li>Inequality and water rights</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video: "The Meaning of the Right to Water"</li> <li>Video: "The Development of the Right to Water"</li> <li>Bluemel, "The Implications of Formulating a Human Right to Water" <i>Ecology Law Quarterly</i> [This one is dense, try to get the basics]</li> <li>Jepson, "Advancing Human Capabilities for Water Security"</li> <li>Wilder, et al., "The Human Right to Water in Mexico, Challenges and Opportunities"</li> </ol>	
4/12	<b>International WaSH and Drinking Water Development Policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on WASH and DW</li> <li>Water development as foreign policy</li> <li>Financing infrastructure in LIMCs</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF/WHO, "Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2000-2020 Update" [Skim to get the main idea]</li> <li>Weinthal, et al., "Development and Diplomacy: Water, the SDGs, and US Foreign Policy"</li> <li>Reed, "In search of a Mission"</li> <li>Streeter, "Financing Water and Sewer Infrastructure in the Developing World"</li> </ol>	<b>Brief 1 Due 1:30 PM uploaded to Canvas</b>

4/19	<p><b>Water Security vs. Food Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water impacts of agriculture</li> <li>• Food security and the water SDGs</li> <li>• High yield export agriculture and water</li> <li>• Food-water security and conflict</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rockstrom, <i>et al.</i> “Future Water Availability for Global Food Production” <i>Water Resources Research</i></li> <li>2. Council on Global Affairs, “Strategies to Enhance Food, Water, and Nutrition Security” <b>Skim to get a sense of the strategies available.</b></li> <li>3. FAO, “Food Loss and Waste and the Linkage to Global Ecosystems”</li> <li>4. WRI, “Creating a Sustainable Food Future”</li> <li>5. Paisley, “Winter is Coming: US Strategic Interests and the Water-Energy-Agriculture Conundrum in Central Asia”</li> </ol>	
4/26	<p><b>Infrastructure Development Conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure as hegemonic power</li> <li>• Mexico/US Canal Policy</li> <li>• Pakistan vs. India vs. China</li> <li>• Aid policy as proxy conflict</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Garcia-Acevedo, “The Confluence of Water, Patterns of Settlement, and Constructions of the Border in the Imperial and Mexicali Valleys (1900-1999)</li> <li>2. Chellaney, “Exploiting the Riparian Advantage,” from <i>Water: Asia’s New Battleground</i></li> <li>3. Tiboris, “Addressing China’s Rising Influence in Africa” <i>Council on Global Affairs</i></li> </ol>	<p><b>Brief 2 Due 1:30 PM uploaded to Canvas</b></p>
5/3	<p><b>Transboundary Water Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trend vs systems analysis</li> <li>• Water treaties vs. infrastructure</li> <li>• Horizontal and substate conflict</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. De Stefano, <i>et al.</i> “Tracking Cooperation and Conflict in International Basins: Historic and Recent Trends” <i>Water Policy</i></li> <li>2. Zeitoun, <i>et al.</i>, “Analysis for Water Conflict Transformation”</li> <li>3. Moore, “Central Control, Localized Interests, and Interprovincial Conflict in the People’s Republic of China”</li> <li>4. Garcia-Acevedo, “The Confluence of Water, Patterns of Settlement, and Constructions of the Border in the Imperial and Mexicali Valleys (1900-1999)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Presentation Due 1:30 PM uploaded to Canvas</b></p>
5/10	<p><b>Climate, Water Insecurity, Violence, and Migration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What we know about violence and water insecurity</li> <li>• Water conflict de-escalation</li> <li>• Water and human migration</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Raleigh and Kniveton, “Come Rain or Shine: An Analysis of Conflict and Climate Variability in East Africa” <i>Journal of Peace Research</i></li> <li>2. Devlin and Hendrix, “Trends and Triggers Redux: Climate Change, Rainfall, and Interstate Conflict” <i>Political Geography</i></li> <li>3. Iceland, “Case Study - Central America’s Dry Corridor”</li> <li>4. WRI, “Water Security Solutions for an Increasingly Water-Insecure World”</li> </ol>	
5/17	<p><b>Emerging Contexts and Adaptation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crises now and in the future</li> <li>• What is adaptation?</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cooley, <i>et al.</i> “Global Water Governance in the Twenty-First Century” in <i>The World’s Water</i></li> <li>2. Michel, “Iran’s Impending Water Crisis”</li> <li>3. Collins and Reddy, “China’s Growing Water Crisis”</li> <li>4. NY Times, “America is Using Up its Groundwater Like there’s No Tomorrow”</li> </ol>	
F	<p><b>Final Paper Due by the end of the day 5/22 uploaded to Canvas:</b>  <b>NOTE This paper is due 5/22 to give us enough time to grade it before the grade deadline for graduating students</b></p>		

## Grading policies and procedures

The assignment/grade breakdown is found above. At the end of the term, the point total is translated into the standard University of Chicago 4 point scale based on the same percentages.

My policy on late assignments is that **I don't accept them at all if you have not made prior arrangements with me to turn them in at another time.** This means contacting me at least 48 hours in advance. (i.e. You can't just fire off an email to me the night before and say "sorry, I'm not turning it in," the matter must be *settled between us 48 hours in advance.*) **That said,** you will find I am very willing to be flexible if the reasons are sensible and you approach me with enough time. Emergencies will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism.** You will be beholden to the University's code of conduct, definitions, and consequences as outlined here:

<https://college.uchicago.edu/advising/academic-integrity-student-conduct>

But much more importantly, from my perspective, is that you do your own work honestly and with earnest effort because anything else is a waste of your time and mine. There is little daylight between dishonest work and dishonest character. Think about the kind of person you want to be and act accordingly.

**Disabilities and Other Special Accommodation.** If you have any concerns or needs here please approach me about them as soon as is convenient. I want to make the class equally accessible to all students. See also the University guidelines on disability accommodation here:  
<https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/accommodations>.

### Instructor Office Hours

TBA

Teaching assistant(s)

TBA

### General Resources Available to Students

Include any texts and links as desired:

- [Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook](#)
- [Student Wellness](#)
- [University Learning Resources](#)

### Harris School and University of Chicago Policies

Include any text and links as desired to highlight or emphasize issues related to academic integrity, disability accommodations, diversity and inclusion, and video and audio recordings.

- [Harris School Policies](#)
- [University General Policies](#)
- [University Academic Policies](#)
- Policies on audio and video [recordings](#) and [deletion](#).